



**Recommendations for
Making Your Yard Lead-Safe**

It's good for kids and good for you.

LEAD CAN BE HARMFUL TO CHILDREN.

Lead poisoning is a serious problem for children and adults. High levels of lead in a child's body can make it difficult for him/her to learn and grow. It can cause behavioral problems and other serious health conditions. Children can be exposed to lead in their homes and in their yards. To lessen the risk of lead poisoning for children, you can make your home and your yard safer.

LEAD IN SOIL IS A PROBLEM.



THE DIRT IN YOUR YARD MAY CONTAIN LEAD.

Most people think of old paint when they hear about lead poisoning, but lead in soil can also be dangerous to kids. Lead is naturally found in all soils, but pollution increases the levels. Lead in soil comes from flaking paint, years of factory pollution and leaded gasoline in cars. When lead gets in soil, it does not wash away or dissolve. The only way to know if there is lead in your yard is to have the soil tested.



LEAD IN THE SOIL CAN BE BAD FOR YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN.

Kids like to play in the dirt. Dirt containing lead gets on their hands and into their mouths. People can also bring leaded dirt into the house on shoes.



YOU CAN MAKE YOUR YARD SAFER.

The Lead Law in Massachusetts does not require land owners to take action because of lead in soil. But Lead-Safe Cambridge wants you to know that there are ways to make your yard safer for children.



LEAD-SAFE CAMBRIDGE CAN HELP.

If your property was deleaded through LSC, you can be a part of our "Safer Soil Program."

WE OFFER:

- Free soil testing for lead
- Education about lead in soil
- Free advice from a landscape designer
- Financial assistance for making your yard lead-safe

HOW MUCH LEAD IS TOO MUCH?

Soil lead levels are measured in parts per million (ppm). The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has defined a soil-lead hazard as 400 ppm for play areas and 1,200 ppm for bare soil in the rest of the yard. If you discover that there are high levels of lead in your yard, there are things you can do to make it safer.

WAYS TO REDUCE LEAD HAZARDS:

Before you start, remember: Don't let kids help with the yard work if there is lead in the soil. Wash work clothes separately from kids' clothes and leave shoes outside. Begin by targeting the 4 risk areas:

1. **PLAY AREAS**

Soil that has lead in it is a danger if your children can get to it. You can get rid of or cover this soil so that kids won't get it in their bodies.



FOLLOW THESE TIPS:

1. Make a play area away from places with old paint, like the house or fence. Encourage children to play in this area by putting toys and swingsets there. Make sure you can see them.
2. Cover leaded dirt:
 - with a landscape fabric and clean gravel. Make a plastic or wooden border to keep gravel in place.
 - with healthy grass. Sod is the best and easiest. You may need to prepare your soil first. Remember a healthy lawn takes a lot of care. Watering is very important. Get advice from a professional before planting.
3. Provide a sandbox.
 - Buy a container for the sand. It's cheap and easy.
 - Cover the sandbox so it stays clean.
 - Make a sandbox by digging out the top 6"-8" of soil, placing a landscape fabric down as a barrier, building a raised wooden border and filling it with clean sand.

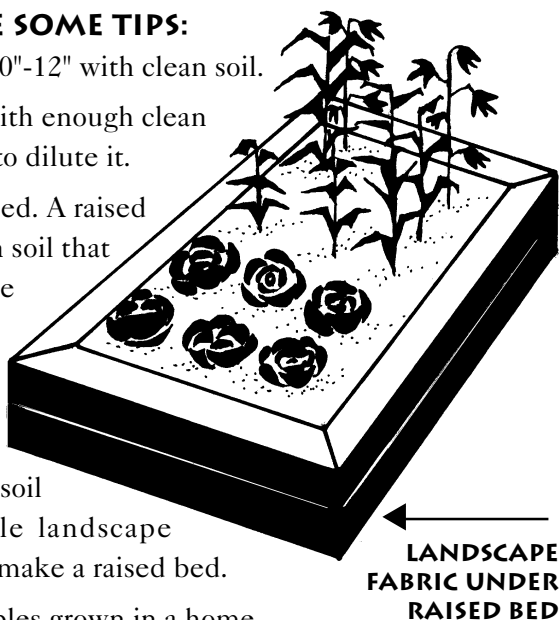
2. VEGETABLE GARDENS

Gardening in leaded soil can be dangerous because of the risk of getting lead on your hands and then into your mouth. If the levels in your garden are above 400 ppm, young children and pregnant women should avoid soil contact. Be sure to wash hands and tools and leave gardening shoes outside your home.

Lead can also get in and on your vegetables and herbs. Plant gardens away from the house and away from traffic. Cars make dust that ends up on your vegetables and in your soil.

IF YOU HAVE HIGH LEVELS OF LEAD IN YOUR GARDEN, HERE ARE SOME TIPS:

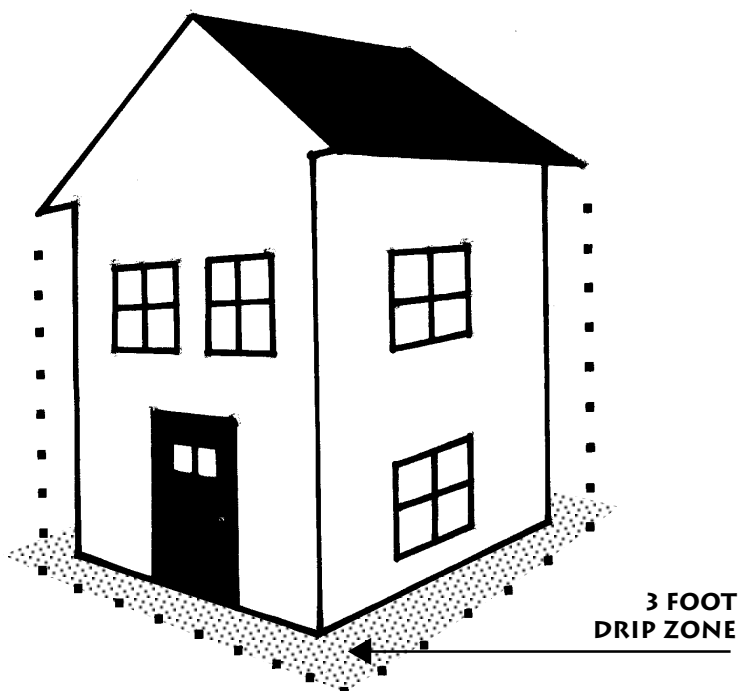
1. Replace the top 10"-12" with clean soil.
2. Rototill the soil with enough clean soil and compost to dilute it.
3. Plant in a raised bed. A raised bed is 12" of clean soil that is put on top of the garden with a wooden or concrete border to keep it in. Cover the leaded soil with a permeable landscape fabric before you make a raised bed.
4. Scrub any vegetables grown in a home garden before eating. Throw away outer leaves of vegetables. This will get rid of dust and dirt from outdoors.



CAUTION: If there is high lead in your soil, do not plant rooted vegetables such as potatoes, radishes, carrots and onions, or leafy vegetables such as lettuce or spinach. Some plants, such as cabbage, collards, kale and tomatoes or other fruiting plants, absorb less lead.

3. DRIP ZONE

The drip zone is the 3 foot strip around the house. It usually has the highest levels of lead. Over the years, wind and rain cause paint chips to fall to the ground and mix with soil.



The best way to get rid of the danger is by having the top 8"-10" of soil removed and taken away. This can be costly.

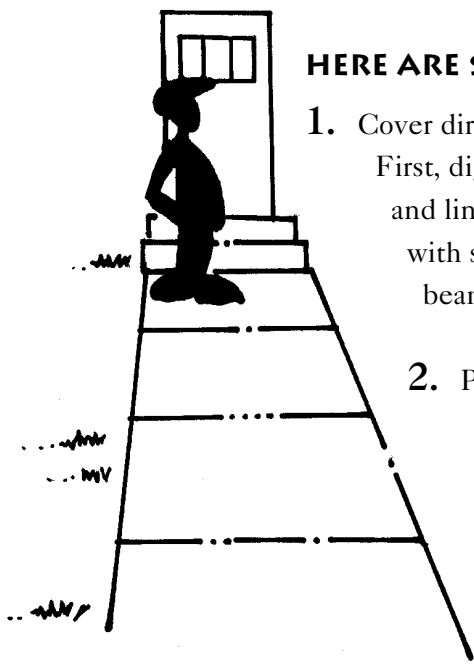
TO KEEP KIDS OUT OF THIS AREA, YOU COULD ALSO DO ONE OR ALL OF THE FOLLOWING:

- cover the area with landscape fabric and mulch
- plant shrubs around the house
- put a small fence around this area

If the outside of your house has flaking lead paint, the soil can be recontaminated.

4. WALKWAYS

Dirt walkways can be a danger because they make dust and bring dirt into the house.



HERE ARE SOME SOLUTIONS:

1. Cover dirt walks with gravel.

First, dig out the top 4" of soil and line the shallow trench with stones or wooden beams.

2. Put in a brick, concrete or stone walkway. If you are not the "handy" type, you will need to hire a contractor.



LANDSCAPING TIPS

1. Make a plan first. Think about who will care for the plants. Will they last? Will they grow in sun or shade? Will they make it through the winter? Will you need to replant in the spring? Will they keep kids away from the soil?
2. Choose shrubs and plants and thick ground covers that will keep kids away from bare soil. In some situations, bushes with thorns are better than bushes with flowers. Ask a gardener or landscape designer to help you make good choices.
3. Remember, all landscaping requires maintenance. Replenish mulch, water lawns and care for your yard to assure a beautiful, lead-safe environment.



OTHER TIPS

Here are some other things you can do to help protect kids from lead in soil.

1. Encourage everyone to wipe their feet outside the house. Take shoes off when you come inside. Put shoes in a box or leave them outside the door. This keeps lead dust and dirt out.
2. Watch kids when they are outside. Don't let them put dirt or dirty things in their mouths.
3. Make sure children wash their hands after playing outside, especially before meals. Keep fingernails clean and short.
4. Keep yard toys outside or wash them before bringing them in.
5. Pets bring dirt into the house. Wipe them off when they come inside. Wash children's hands after playing with pets.
6. Park cars in one place, preferably on a paved area. You can build a wood, stone or concrete border around that area to keep dust in. Parking cars in the yard does not let the grass grow and creates dirt and dust.

**REMEMBER, THE ONLY
WAY TO KNOW IF THERE
IS LEAD IN YOUR SOIL IS
TO HAVE IT TESTED.**



**FOR MORE INFORMATION:
CALL
617-349-5323 (LEAD)**

**OR VISIT US ON THE WEB AT:
www.cambridgema.gov/~LeadSafe**

Español and Português

**A program of the City of Cambridge
Community Development Department**

In Massachusetts there is no law that says that a property owner must take action against lead in the soil. But, landscaping to make your yard lead-safe is still a good idea. You will make it safe for children and make the property look better.

Lead-Safe Cambridge will help you take action. Get into the “Safer Soil Program” and make a yard that is safe and beautiful.